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SENATE RESOLUTION 99
By Dixon

A RESOLUTION to honor the Bethel African Episcopal Church in Memphis and its congregation for 106 years of service to their Lord and community.

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that the members of this legislative body should recognize those venerable religious institutions and their congregations who, through their unflagging capacity for love, dedication of spirit, and faith in God, strive to enrich the lives of people in their communities; and

WHEREAS, the Bethel African Episcopal Church of Memphis is most assuredly one such extraordinary group of people who are deserving of special praise and commendation; and

WHEREAS, this year, the church's congregation will celebrate 106 years of positive influence in Memphis and the many different mission points by which they have helped to carry the Gospel; and

WHEREAS, the celebration will be a time of reflecting on the past, giving thanks for the present, and eagerly anticipating the future; and

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WHEREAS, it was in the late winter or early spring of 1894 that a handful of believers in Christ with divine inspiration and faith in God assembled as Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in a section of Memphis known as “China Town”; and

WHEREAS, for forty-seven years the church thrived on Brunswick Street in the area that is now known as LeMoyne Gardens; and

WHEREAS, the church experienced tremendous membership growth due to the initiative of those faithful Christian workers; under the efficient pastorate of Reverend H. R. Reynolds, the congregation moved from “China Town” to 626 Wicks Avenue in 1941; and

WHEREAS, since that time the laity has experienced numerous changes in the lives and hearts of both the laypeople and the pastorate; and

WHEREAS, ministers who served selflessly and untiringly to support Bethel African Episcopal Church were the Reverends H.P. Burton; H.W. Henning, John Hunter, Rogers, I.T. Jefferson, W.E. Pruitt, E.R. Keyes, Louis Williams, R.L. McRae, O.T. Hooks, J.L. Gleese, M.L. Young, and W.W. Wortham; and

WHEREAS, the church facilities also grew as a physical plant, kitchen area, and pastor’s study were all added; and

WHEREAS, further ministering to the good people of the church community, Bethel has supported organizations including, the Church School, The Gloria Devlin Club, the Usher Board, the White Lily Club, the Senior Missionary Society, and the Young People’s Department; and

WHEREAS, countless esteemed members of the congregation have pioneered and labored so that the church would continue to prosper; those who have gone on to be with the Lord include, Hettie Mitchell, Wesley and Daisy Scott, Gloria Jean Devlin, Etta Giles, Vassie and Gertrude Gullledge, Arthur and Bennie Brown, Willie M. Spears, Leslie Alexander, Booker T. and Charlie Marie Johnson, Lula Bell, Lee Caldwell, Eva Howard, Bessie M. Duncan, J.B. and Laura Slaughter, Lera Shed, Norris Porter, and Ruby West; and

WHEREAS, in August of 1977, Bishop H. Thomas Primm, Presiding Bishop of the 13th Episcopal District, appointed Reverend Charles E. Ware, pastor and shepherd of this great flock; and

WHEREAS, the church continued its exodus and moved from Wicks Avenue to Alcy Road in October 1977; and

WHEREAS, Bethel African Episcopal Church has weathered the storms of life for more than a century and is still pressing toward the attainment of the higher calling of God in Christ Jesus; and

WHEREAS, for 106 years, this blessed church and its congregation have grown and prospered as an institution of time-honored family values and selfless love; and

WHEREAS, the church's past has been good, and the future promises continued blessings for the good people who comprise the membership of its congregation; and

WHEREAS, religious organizations such as the Bethel African Episcopal Church are truly the rock-solid foundation upon which our society is built and a beacon of sanity and continuity in these turbulent times, and the members of this fine congregation should be appropriately honored for their exemplary service to their fellow Christians and to the good people of Tennessee; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, That we hereby honor the Bethel African Episcopal Church and its congregation on the celebration of their 106th anniversary and applaud their efforts as a welcoming fellowship, striving to be faithful in worship, discipleship, and for reaching out to the world with the Good News of Jesus Christ.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.